Alinin

Tche-ka

No. 14

TCHE-KA

The Story of the Bolshevist Extraordinary Commission

BY

K. ALININ

Illustrated
by
Six Authentic Photographs

RUSSIAN LIBERATION COMMITTEE
173 FLEET STREET E.C. 4

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THE aim of the Liberation Committee is the overthrow of Bolshevism, the restoration of order in and the regeneration of Russia.

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PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF THE
ODESSA "TCHREZVYCHAIKA"

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ILLUSTRATED
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SIX AUTHENTIC PHOTOGRAPHS

"It has pleased God that our unhappy country should be cleansed from her disgrace by the blood of innocent martyrs. Therefore your sorrow is the sorrow of all honest and thinking Russians."

RUSSIAN LIBERATION COMMITTEE
173 FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.4

To the Orphans of the Victims of the
Extraordinary Commission ("Tchrezvychaika")
the Author
dedicates these sorrowful reminiscences

PREFACE

TUR. K.—"Tchrezvychaika" . .

Oh, how this sound
Echoes in the Russian heart!

I DO not know what the Commissions were like in large cities, in both capitals, and various out-of-the-way places, where local "politicians," contrary to common sense and existing Government decrees, established their own private "Tchrezvychaikas." Still, I am aware that those local chambers of torture served to settle petty personal grievances, to satisfy the lust of revenge and the cruelty of sundry nonentities with disappointed ambitions, and . . . blood, human blood, flowed freely!

Here I will describe only my own impressions and reminiscences of the Odessa Commission, in the cells of which I spent four dreary weeks, was sentenced to be shot, and only escaped by some miracle.

Before submitting to the reader a truthful diary of this past nightmare, I shall try to give a short description of the part played by these Extraordinary Commissions in the Soviet Administration.

In the North the "Tchrezvychaikas" were established as Special Investigation Commissions, combining the functions of ordinary Assizes with those of Military Courts-Martial.

This very appellation "extraordinary" indicated the temporary character of these institutions on the one hand, and on the other their special powers, such as the right of arresting any official of the Soviet Republic, as well as the right of the Commission's praesidium to conduct any trial, the investigation of which was carried out by its agents.

The Commissions in Northern Russia, according to the scheme of their creators, were to be chiefly institutions for investigation and prosecution. Legal functions constituted a right but not a duty of these Extraordinary Commissions, which could pass over any case to be openly tried by some other extraordinary law-court, such as the Revolutionary Tribunal (or Rev-Tribunal). The Soviet law knows no definite regulation which should indicate whether a case is to be heard in the Commission or the Revolutionary Tribunal.

So the Northern "Tchrezvychaikas," endowed with unlimited powers, free from any kind of subordination, very swiftly took up a position of a State within a State.

All subsequent efforts of the Soviet of People's Commissaries and some of its individual members to put a stop to the bloody orgy of these torture-chambers were stubbornly resisted by these Extraordinary Commissions.

How independent the heads of these "Tchrezvychaikas" felt themselves, how hypnotised they were by the magic meaning and terrorising force of the two letters "tch-k," may be judged by the words I often heard from one of the officials of the Odessa torture-chamber:

"We owe allegiance to no one, except to the Extraordinary Commission of the Ukraine. Hang the Executive Committee of the workmen's delegates and all the Soviets! If we choose, we will arrest Lenin himself!"

How is this unlimited power of the "tch-k" to be explained—a power, whose yoke was acutely felt even by those who stood at the head of the Soviet Republic? This autocratic sway of the Commissions seems all the more incomprehensible in view of the deep indignation and even hatred which they inspired in the supreme rulers of the Soviet State—the workmen, and especially the peasants. According to my observations, the power of these Commissions was chiefly based upon the support of armed force, the special units attached to them. The upkeep of those detachments cost the country milliards; they lived like fighting-cocks, and could improve their condition still further by plundering the peaceful population.

In revolutionary times, in the midst of a most fearful anarchy and a full disruption of the administration system, the question of power is decided by the ratio of forces. This ratio was favourable to the "tch-k."

Besides all this, the Soviet Government's very existence, its safety, always depended on the support of the Commissions, especially in the North, where the "intelligentsia" and the "conscious," or politically developed workmen, stubbornly refused to submit to the Soviet regime, where every day saw the birth of some new plot to overthrow the Government.

Still, efforts to control the activities of the All-Russian

"Tchrezvychaika" were frequently made. A series of decrees deprived the Commissions of their function in combating sabotage, speculation, prosecuting official abuses.

Thus the "Tchrezvychaikas" were chiefly concerned with counter-revolution and profiteering, the latter being looked upon as one of the manifestations of counter-revolution. Another decree abolished the District Commissions, which, closely affecting the rural population, were responsible for causing particular irritation among the peasantry. Later on we see an effort to control the activity of the "Black Cabinet," the Praesidium of the Extraordinary Commission. A representative of the Supreme Socialistic Inspection is delegated to the sittings of this praesidium. Among other measures taken to curtail the hideous arbitrary arrests, it is necessary to note the Kharkoff decree concerning the "introduction of order into the investigations concerning persons kept under arrest."

This decree, specially published for the Ukraine, obliged all persons and institutions making arrests to pass over the cases of the arrested persons to corresponding investigation and legal institutions within twenty-four hours from the moment of their arrest. These institutions are named, among them being also the Extraordinary Commissions.

Paragraph 3 of this decree states: "All persons and institutions making arrests are obliged to supply immediately the People's Commissary for Justice and corresponding local legal institutions with detailed information on the cases of all the persons arrested."

Lastly, another decree orders all the Soviet investigation and legal institutions, without exception, shall deliver to the arrested person a definite accusation not later than forty-eight hours after his arrest.

I shall pass over all the other circulars and instructions, by means of which the Ukrainian Government strove to introduce legal guarantee into the orgy of violence and arbitrary actions, so remote from socialistic guarantees of personal inviolability. All these measures taken by the Central Administration, perfectly aware of the precarious position of Bolshevism in the Ukraine, were as a voice crying in the wilderness, and were flatly ignored by local authorities when

they did reach them. The Soviet reconstruction gave access to the political administration not only to a whole band of adventurers and demagogues, but also to persons with a criminal past and to bandits: thus the task of reconstruction was often carried out by criminal and unclean hands. So all decrees bearing in the least degree a national and really socialistic character remained merely as evidences of good intentions, and were never obeyed. It is known how extensively the illegal confiscations of the peasants' produce were carried out in the Ukraine, and with what enmity the Soviet economic detachments were met by the rural population. The numerous endeavours to introduce "communism" by force among the peasants are also well known. In short, the "commanding" in the villages mentioned by Lenin brought about the expected results, and the word "commune" became a bugbear in the Ukrainian villages, the District Extraordinary Commissions continued to exist as independent units, owing allegiance to no one, and carrying out their bloody, senseless, and shameless work, utterly indifferent to the opinion of the peasant masses." It is these district and village "Tchrezvychaikas" that achieved the task of compromising the Soviet administration in the villages. Frequently outbursts of the peasants' fury swept away these rural torture-chambers, without awaiting for help from the Volunteer Army. In large towns, such as Odessa, any effort to curtail the commissioners' powers were simply ignored. In vain the local legal Department of the Soviet strained its energies in order to introduce some control over the "Tchrezvychaika's" activities: the leaders of the latter repulsed all these efforts. The only concession they made was to supply the Soviet legal department with a list of the persons arrested; but this department was powerless to influence in any way the fate of the victims. After repeated demands, the Extraordinary Commission delivered a batch of senseless old dossiers, from which it was impossible not only to find any proofs against the accused, but it was even difficult to understand what they were accused of. The more important cases concerning speculation remained in the hands of the Commission, "which was reluctant to part with so profitable an item of revenue," according to the remark of one of the Soviet officials. A most astounding

situation was created. The functions of the section of criminal investigation, which, by order of a decree, was to investigate the case dealing with profiteering, were usurped by the Extraordinary Commission, whereas the case concerning brigandage, constituting one of the direct tasks of the Commission, was carried on by the section of criminal investigation, and, it must be said, carried on with utmost fearlessness. Nearly every day the best agents of this section were arrested by bandits in broad daylight and carried off to some unknown destination. Some days later, their bodies would be found thrown out in the street, disfigured, with traces of horrible tortures. The section—a small group of courageous, but scantily armed men—used to be often attacked and surrounded by splendidly armed bands of robbers, having at their disposal not only rifles and revolvers, but also machine-guns, presented by the praesidium of the Executive Committee to the regiment of bandits "of comrade Lenin," and commanded by the notorious Mishka Yaponchik (Moses Vinnitzky).

In general the bandits were securely settled in Odessa, one of their wings was in contact with the army, the other —with the "Tchrezvychaika." In this way their power was well insured. The opposition which the Revolutionary Tribunal offered the Commission was also fruitless. The latter distrusted the Tribunal and passed over to it only such cases as were of no interest to the Commission. Sometimes the transfer of cases to the Revolutionary Tribunal was a consequence of endeavours and prayers of the victims or their friends.

I consider this Preface necessary in order to give a short general summary, intended to emphasise the fact that the Extraordinary Commission existed and acted as something not only beyond all law and control but also as something inaccessible. Is it surprising that everyone upon whom its doors closed considered himself buried alive? And if he succeeded in escaping from its blood-stained walls he came out a physical and moral wreck, crippled for life.

I think it necessary to explain that all the events and separate facts are recorded by me with nearly photographic precision. The order of grouping separate episodes coincides with the reality only in the general outline.

Facts which I did not witness myself are described by me from words of several eyewitnesses, and recorded only after having been closely verified. The names of the victims —my unhappy comrades—are mostly the real ones. Only those of very few persons have been altered or abbreviated owing to various considerations, though I am sure the majority of the survivors will easily recognise in them their former comrades.

CHAPTER I.

The Arrest

I WAS arrested towards the evening in the following way. Two sailors, accompanied by a puny individual with shifty eyes and a student's cap, came in. The man drew out of his pocket a greasy mandate with his photo and the ominous triangular seal with the inscription: "U.S.S.R., the Odessa Extraordinary Commission."

"You are arrested," the man said, and involuntarily the usual question, the futility of which I realised, escaped my lips, "What for?" Hastily I racked my brains, vainly trying to find in my past life some reason for being arrested. "What for?" I repeated mentally, unable to discover anything definitely criminal to Bolshevist eyes.

"Possibly," thought I, "I may have spoken incautiously, manifesting in some way that natural protest against Bolshevist tyranny which every cultured man is bound to feel.

"Sit down," said the man, drawing out a blank form.

I was searched. My identity papers and money were confiscated. During the proceedings one of the sailors pocketed half a pound of tea, the other expropriated my sugar. The man in a student's cap was filling in a paper with my replies to the usual questions concerning my name, occupation, and additional information about the confiscated documents and money. The tea, sugar, gold watch, and two bracelets belonging to my wife were not mentioned.

"Let us go now," said the student.

"My wife will return shortly," I replied; "she has gone to see some neighbours, let me wait for her to say good-bye."

"I cannot, said the man. "The house commissary will tell her of your arrest. But you have nothing to worry about. They will keep you for a couple of days, and set you free, since you are innocent."

"But what am I accused of?"

"Counter-Revolution. There has been a complaint."

After some hesitation I suddenly said: "Why did you omit mentioning my wife's jewels? These trifles are not of considerable value, but are dear to her as souvenirs. Besides, she has nothing but those; you have taken all the

money; she will have nothing to live on. She could have pawned them."

"What bracelets?" asked the man. "I took nothing."

"No, but the sailor comrades did."

One of the sailors, a fair man with small colourless lynx eyes and a square flat face (a Lett, as I was told later), glared at me.

"What is he lying about?" he said to the student. "We took nothing. There were no bracelets. It's all *bourgeois* tricks. May the . . ."

"Correct, comrade!" affirmed the other sailor insolently.

"Well," mumbled the student with displeasure, "probably your wife hid those things, and you accuse people. Do you know what fate threatened you? We show no mercy, it's 'Stand up to be shot!' We make a clean job of it."

I did not argue, though I had seen the things disappear into the sailors' pockets.

"Move on!" grunted the Lett, hitting me in the back with the butt of his rifle.

We went out. When in the street I suddenly felt a moral numbness and indifference. At the hands of those unscrupulous men I felt I could not expect justice or even the shadow of impartiality. "This is the beginning . . . it is death . . ." crossed my mind.

I was led into a large room in 7 Ekaterinensky Square. There I found the criminal investigator on duty—a young man with a clean-shaven, pleasant face, apparently a student. He verified my documents and entered my name in a book.

"What are you accused of?" he inquired.

"Just what I intended to ask *you*," I replied.

"Still, you must feel guilty of something?"

"No, I do not."

"Hm! everybody says the same. Well, of course, it may be simply a misunderstanding—a mistake, though every accusation is first verified by an agency, and the arrest made only subsequently."

"Yes, comrade, but who are those agents to whom men's lives are entrusted?"

I recollected the sailors who arrested me.

"Agents?" The criminal investigator shrugged his shoulders. "Yes, of course, there are different kinds, but the

investigation is conducted by special officials, trustworthy communists, jurists. In short, everything will be explained soon. You have no reason to worry. You will be locked up for a couple of days and set free if there is nothing against you."

This conversation cheered me up. Perhaps all this talk about "Tchrezvychaika" and its terrors are exaggerated, I thought. They have criminal investigators here, like this young student who produces the impression of a cultured man. I was feeling hopeful. Later on I saw that the students' caps were worn here and degraded by individuals having nothing in common with the universities. From the criminal investigator I was taken to the Commandant. The Commandant, a fair-haired young fellow, was writing the necessary information about me on a red registration card. Several agents were in the room—mostly youths. They were exchanging impressions concerning successful searches and disclosed "cases."

"Do you know, Senka," said one of these youths to the Commandant, "Lenia has cocaine? Five grams!"

"Give me one," answered the Commandant.

"Pay me 200 roubles."

"You swine! Profiteer! I know very well what you paid for the cocaine. It did not cost you two copeks."

"You know nothing whatever. At all events, it is mine, and I can get 200 roubles for a gram."

"You won't get anything; you will sniff it up yourself."

The sailor who accompanied me interfered: "Why are you carrying on your trading before a stranger! Pack him off to a cell and go on talking."

The Commandant finished his writing, and I was led off.

CHAPTER II.

The Lett

THROUGH a gate I was led into the large yard of the Levashov house. At one time it had been occupied by a girls' school. This yard, which in former times had been the pupils' playground, was carefully swept up by the prisoners, who even now, though it was already dusk, were busy with barrows and brooms.

In the middle of the yard a sentry sat on the edge of a dried-up fountain, and at times shouted at the workers. I noticed with what zest all these members of the bourgeoisie and "intelligentsia" were doing their work. In the work itself there was, of course, nothing humiliating or degrading, but I was struck with the cruel contempt with which our gaolers emphasised the wretchedly dependent position of the prisoners. I noticed a short man with untidy hair and an unkempt beard, who was carrying a bucket full of rubbish, emptied it, and started washing and cleaning the bucket with sand under the tap. I recognised Professor Scherbakov. A party of some ten prisoners was brought in. They were all dusty and tired. The collars of their soiled, thin shirts were open, the perspiration was running down their unshaved cheeks. They had returned from work.

I was brought into a room, received by the chief of the guard, and led down a passage. He stopped at the door of a cell.

"Tell the Commissary," he shouted, "to receive the prisoner."

I entered. Formerly it had been a class-room, now it had been divided by a wooden partition into two parts. In each part boards were fixed along the walls, and in the midst stood a table, round which sat a group of prisoners. I noticed bars in the windows, apparently a recent addition. I remembered that I had seen some bars in the yard, at which some carpenters were working. The poet's words came into my mind :

> "We will reduce villages to ashes, towns to dust.
> Scythes and ploughs into swords."

"And schools into prisons," I added mentally.

In the meantime, the man whom the sentry called "Commissary" invited me to follow him. In the second room, behind the partition, he ordered me to sit down, and drew out from beneath the mattress of his bed (the prisoners slept on bare boards) a large volume, which had once been a school-list, and the pages of which were covered with the names of the former pupils of my prison. The Commissary started questioning me. A group of prisoners and young men in uniforms, who appeared to be military, gathered round us. As I discovered later, they were Red Guards, youths from cultured families.

"Why were you arrested?" asked the Commissary sternly.

"I have no idea. I was told that I should be released in a couple of days."

Loud laughter drowned my voice. "So you have been arrested for two days?" said one of the Red Guards, roaring with laughter. "My congratulations! And this one"—he pointed at a young Jewish student sitting near the window—"was arrested for half an hour." "They said: 'You'll stay half an hour.' And he is here over a month already. And yet he is an agent of the 'tche-ka' itself. How long will you stay, then, if you have been sent here for two days? Commissary, make the calculation!"

"Yes," added another Red Guard. "There are eight of us here. We are Soviet officials—Red Guards. We were called as witnesses. We waited half a day to be questioned. A member of the praesidium, or a chief of department, saw us, and asked why we were there. We answered that we had been called up as witnesses in the case of so-and-so. 'Oh, so you are concerned with that case,' he cried. 'Arrest them all'; and here we have been for the last three weeks."

"Do you know what you are accused of?" I asked.

"Accused of? We were not even questioned. Here we are rotting away, and how long we shall stay nobody knows!"

"What is there to know? We shall stay until we get 'cashed.'"

"Cashed?" I inquired.

"Oh, you don't understand! Zakler, you are Commissary—explain!"

A new explosion of laughter.

"Well, you see," said Zakler, "in Odessa there is a shortage of small coin. So a money-changer's office has been opened here. When a revolver is applied to the back of your head, your skull will burst into small fragments, or cash!"

A dark, intellectual-looking man, apparently a Jew, approached us. "Are you not ashamed to worry a man?" he said, "it is hard enough for him, and here you are terrorising him. Why?"

"We must question him, literary comrade," replied Zakler pomposely.

"Are you a counter-revolutionary?" he turned to me.

"I, no, I do not think so."

"I advise you to make a full confession. I think I know you. You were a volunteer?"

"I was never in the military service."

"Oh, you may tell us that. So you were in the 'varta.' Do you remember his face, Simonov?" he asked one of the Red Guards.

"I was never in the 'varta,'" I said.

Simonov came up to me, stared at me for a long time, then he guffawed and turned away. Zakler laughed too, not being able to play his part. I guessed that, being a newcomer, I was simply having my leg pulled.

"I tell you once more, stop these jokes," said the man of letters. "Do not answer them, comrade. They are only prisoners, like you and me."

"Have you really no conscience, gentlemen?" said a respectable-looking old man, with a straightforward, clear look in his eyes, seated at the back of the room on a bench. "Can you not feel for the man? Why add to his troubles?"

"All right," remarked Simonov, good-naturedly. "Forgive us, comrade. In this accursed place one does not know what to do, one gets so bored. So we question every newcomer, it helps to entertain us."

"A nice kind of entertainment," said the writer. "Come, comrade, I will fix you up next to me, on the boards. In the other part it is quieter; here these hapless youths give one no peace."

A little later my protector, sitting next to me on the boards, was explaining the "regime" of the "Tchrezvychaika." "Of course," he said, "you don't care for food at present. The first day I could eat nothing. But one gets accustomed to anything. The principal thing is bread. We get a quarter of a pound of bread in the morning, and it has to last the whole day. Later, a small spoonful of sugar, and at seven o'clock a soup, consisting only of cabbage. You could not last a week upon such fare. You must buy your own food. Many receive parcels from home, distributed twice weekly, on Wednesdays and Sundays. Half is stolen by these scoundrels—the sentries and the 'money-changers,' *i.e.* the executioners. I see you have no clothes with you. Well, I will give you my coat."

A thin, dark-bearded prisoner approached us, and also gave me a few words of encouragement. "Look at me," he said, "I am a Soviet official, and had a decent post. I used to be a solicitor—certainly not a Communist. I have been here ten days, and as yet I do not know what I am accused of. I know that an intrigue is carried on against me, that it is in somebody's interest to see me 'cashed.' And I am sure that I shall be 'cashed,'—according to the cynical expression in use here. And here I am spending my days wretchedly, like a beast brought to be slaughtered. I eat, sleep, and have no hopes."

"Cheer up, dear Vladislav Petrovich," interrupted the writer, "somehow I feel certain that you will be free."

Mironin, the solicitor, waved his hand, smiled sadly, and lay down upon the boards.

"Here is a man," said the writer, "who only a fortnight ago could do so much good. He, literally speaking, snatched scores of men from here. And now he is accused of counter-revolution, of sabotage, because he tries to save numerous counter-revolutionaries—and there! I hear his own position is very precarious. And yet he is always consoling others, giving advice, writing petitions, knowing himself to be doomed. I am so sorry for him, and we are great friends. If Bolshevists had many officials like him life would be tolerable. But in that case it would no more be Bolshevism. I am a writer; I was a Menshevist Social-Democrat, and at present am considered counter-revolu-

tionary. Of course, if all that is going on is called 'revolution,' I am indeed counter-revolutionary!"

Just then two of our comrades brought in dinner—two buckets. For each section a bucketful of yellowish hot water with cabbage. It was placed on the table, and all these starving people literally threw themselves upon it. Hurriedly, pushing one another, the prisoners dipped ladles improvised from old tins, and tumblers made of bottles, into the muddy yellow liquid. Everyone strove to get as much cabbage as possible. It was painful to see these poor wretches, who used to belong to the cultured classes, in their moral abasement ready to squabble over every spoonful of nasty slops.

My embarrassment did not escape the writer's notice.

"You are not accustomed to this sight," he said. "Yes, this life can bring man down to anything. We hear nothing but blasphemous swearing. The bloody cynicism which pervades everything here constitutes a real nightmare. We are looked upon as cattle brought for slaughter, but even cattle are better treated. We are only condemned—most of us are doomed. Our gaolers make us feel that constantly. And I confess that in this atmosphere one gradually deteriorates morally. One is ashamed to look into each other's eyes; one does not care to think of the fate awaiting us. Why should we? Whom could we appeal to, from whom expect justice? Only from God. And does it not seem queer that here, in this valley of death, all only think of food? It is an instinctive, animal desire to go on living. You are aware that you need nothing any more. Why should one eat, drink, sleep, if at any moment one may be called out for execution? Many even send their clothes and blankets home, so that the executioners should not get them."

"What do you mean? Are not the things returned to the relatives?"

"Never. After the execution the executioners come and demand the victim's belongings. But you will see all those things yourself."

Later on, before going to bed, the writer warned me: "Beware of Zakler. He is the Chief Commissary, I think; is already sentenced to death, and is trying to save him-

self by reporting all he hears in the cells. In a word, he is a provocator; take care what you say in his presence."

We heard a noise in the corridor; the sentries posted before the doors of the cells became restless; our sentry opened the door and quickly counted the prisoners.

"All are here," said the Commissary. "Gadis, Gadis is coming!" anxious voices were saying.

"Lie down, all of you, d— —n you!" cried Zakler. The door opened, and a thick, middle-sized man appeared on the threshold. His face was clean-shaven, and puffy, with grey, colourless eyes, which glanced swiftly and gloomily from under heavy eyelids. In his hand he held a loaded revolver, which he pointed at us.

"Why are you not asleep?" shouted Gadis irascibly. "I said that at eleven all should be sleeping. Am I to knock you down, scoundrels? I see dirt, and the box with rubbish has not been carried out. I will make you lick up the dirt with your tongues another time, you. . . . I will teach you hygiene!"

"The box was not carried out because we were not allowed to leave the room after dinner," somebody remarked.

"Hold your tongue. I do not care. You are not to argue. I will cause you . . . to be beaten with rifle-butts.

And another torrent of blasphemy was poured upon the prisoners. Gadis was stuttering, panting out this torrent of words. Noticing my boots, he sprang up to me brandishing his revolver: "Did I not give orders for boots to be taken off?"

"I only came to-day," I replied.

"March off to carry out the rubbish. Filthy 'bourgeois.' Perhaps you need lackeys?" Soon Gadis left, but for a long while we heard him shouting in the upper story, where other cells were situated.

I tried to sleep somehow on the bare, uneven boards. But for a long time I could not succeed. Besides, I suffered a lot from insects.

"Oh, you have begun scratching yourself," said my new friend, the writer. "Yes, we have a great variety here: fleas, lice, and bugs. Light helps a little against the latter. We let the electric light burn all night: then they do not bite so hard—fearing the light, so it is said."

Behind the door the sentries were arguing and quarrelling loudly. I had been listening for some time to this talk. The argument was over an extra meat ration that one of them had received. The discussion became louder, and the voices were echoed by the stone walls of the corridor. Sleep became impossible.

"You see," said Mironin, "they forget we are human beings; we are even not allowed to sleep."

"We are doomed," gently remarked old Piotrovsky, who had been praying long and fervently in his corner, and was now settling down to rest. He lay for a long time, mumbling prayers. In the corridor somebody was reasoning with the quarrelling parties.

"It is not the comrade's fault," a monotonous voice was saying, "all depends upon the cook. There is a young one in the kitchen, who deals out equal portions. The other is a new one. He is not yet accustomed. . . . The other night, when 'money was changed,' our guard did not sleep all night. And in the morning there was no bread for us. Such a thing, certainly, ought not to be overlooked."

It was weird and terrible to listen to those indifferent words—here, where it seemed that the awful mask of death stared at us from every corner, where a world of unheard-of sufferings and tears seemed to have condensed into one smothered silent moan. I could not sleep that night.

CHAPTER III.

New Acquaintances

THEY woke me up in the morning to wash the floors of the cell. In the corridor a small, pale, thin old man was pointed out to me. He was zealously rubbing the floor with a cloth. I was told it was the well-known General Ebyeloff. It was painful to look at him, reduced to a shadow by sufferings. He had been here for a long time; then, owing to his case having been taken up by the Revolutionary Tribunal he was transferred to prison; but shortly before my arrest the "Tchrezvychaika" demanded his return. A youth of 17-18 was cleaning the passage with him. His name was Fedorenko, and his father, a divisional commander, had been shot here, before the eyes of the poor boy. The youth was trying to do the work for the poor old man, but the latter was protesting good-naturedly.

"Never mind, my dear fellow, I can do my bit yet. I have been transferred from prison; it probably means that my case will be re-examined. And what could they have against me, indeed? I am sixty-five. I retired from active service a long time ago. I shall be released, probably. My wife is pleading for me. Never mind God grant I shall not have long to endure now. I can work." And the old man, smiling kindly, carried off a pailful of water, bending under its weight.

"He hopes and believes in his deliverance," said Mironin, coming up to me, "but I think the poor old fellow is doomed. You have no idea of the difficulty there was to have his case transferred to the Revolutionary Tribunal. Yesterday (I think) he was suddenly brought back here from prison, and I hear the "Tchrezvychaika" has demanded his case. These are ominous signs. If he were to be let off, they would have liberated him straight from the prison. Besides, I fear that his transfer here may be in connection with the declaration of the "Red Terror."

"Tell me," I asked, "are all those who are transferred from prison shot?"

"No, but many have been executed," answered Mironin. "However, here it is impossible to know or foresee anything."

The same day I made the acquaintance of many of my fellow prisoners. The renowned Polish painter Krjijanovsky was in my cell. He was the only painter who had painted battle pictures from an aeroplane. Wishing to experience life in the air, he became an aviator—his name is well known to artistic Europe. He was imprisoned, owing to an accusation of counter-revolution, because he was attached to the Volunteer army as aviator. Besides that, he was held as a Polish hostage.

He too had been transferred to prison and later sent back to the "Tchrezvychaika." He explained this as a very unfavourable omen for himself. An excellent comrade, a noble, straightforward and honest man, Krjijanovsky was awaiting his fate with calm courage. By a queer coincidence, later on I was imprisoned in the very cell (No. 138) of the Odessa prison, upon the walls of which Krjijanovsky had scribbled his name in pencil.

He was on friendly terms with another Pole, Skachinsky, also accused of counter-revolution. The latter was a fair, thin man, pleasant and very vivacious. His case was a serious one. He was accused of open propaganda against the Soviet Government. As an expert in agriculture, he was attached to some village "Poverty Committee" and drew the attention of the local Soviet to the serious abuses which took place on the farm where he worked. An honest straightforward man, Skachinsky did not scruple to declare in the Committee that the Soviet Power, being in the hands of thieves and adventurers, cannot exist. He did not deny his words in the Extraordinary Commission.

"I do not meddle in politics; I am not a Russian subject, and the Russian Government does not concern me," Skachinsky declared to the investigation agent: "but I neither believe in your authorities nor respect them."

His wife, an energetic woman, was doing her utmost on his behalf. She succeeded in penetrating to Kalenichenko, chairman of the Commission, and took her lovely little girl everywhere with her. Once, whilst her mother was talking to the cruel chief of the Odessa torture-chamber the child came up to him and embraced him. This happened so unexpectedly that the stern chairman was touched:

"No," he said, "I cannot execute this child's father, though his crime is evident."

Notwithstanding this, Skachinsky had been in prison six weeks. In view of the serious accusations, Kalenichenko dared not release him, though showing him marks of sympathy.

Upon the day I am speaking of Krjijanovsky was called up to be questioned, and he did not return for some time. The prisoners were anxious. It was reported that a box of wine and brandy had been brought in in the afternoon, and that was a bad omen. The prisoners, whose nervous attention nothing escaped, had noticed that executions always followed after wine had been sent to the "Tchrezvychaika." The executioners carried on their bloody revels before the execution. This day everybody was feeling particularly depressed.

"Do you feel this atmosphere to-day?" said the writer coming up to me. "Have you noticed the Left Abash: he is already drunk and Volodka too."

Under the name of Volodka one of the Red Guards, a good-looking young fellow, was known to the whole prison. He usually wore bright red breeches, smart boots, and had a fair curl falling from under his cap.

The writer went on excitedly: "I feel there will be executions. On such days one is particularly restless. I am going mad. Look at everybody, they are moving about the cell like beasts in a cage. There, do you hear? Volodka has attacked somebody in the yard and is shouting: he is drunk; they are all drunk. And nowhere to go, nowhere to hide from this terror!" And burying his face in his hands, the writer paced rapidly up and down the cell.

A fearful painful agitation took hold of me. I walked down the passage. The same oppressed, strained anticipation reigned in all the cells. With wandering eyes, pale and nervous, the unhappy prisoners huddled together in groups, whispering to each other.

"There, they are ready to die," thought I. "Everyone is expecting, with a shudder, his number to be called out, and none know whose lot it will be to-day." And, involuntarily, I caught myself thinking joyfully:

"At all events, nothing threatens me yet. I have not

even been questioned; no charge sheet has been handed me. No, certainly not I; all the others, but not I." And instantly I felt ashamed of this feeling of animal relief.

"Well, if not to-day, to-morrow my turn may come too. May it come quickly! Happy is he who has already passed the threshold of eternity, has been delivered from this nightmare, this dreadful uncertainty."

I returned to my cell. Soon Krjijanovsky came back. He was surrounded and overwhelmed with questions.

"The chairman sent for me," Krjijanovsky told us. "He was quite amiable. Told me I would be set free, that nothing threatened me. He only made it a condition that I should paint a picture on the subject, 'The Red Star will shine over the world.' If you succeed," he said, "I will set you free."

We were all sincerely glad and congratulated him.

"Undoubtedly you will pass the test," said the writer. "It is interesting, whether you have a plan for this picture?"

Krjijanovsky smiled mysteriously. "I have thought out something," he said. "To-morrow I will start work."

"But just think how awful!" said Mironin indignantly. "Is it possible to make a man's life depend upon whether he will succeed in painting a picture on a given subject. It sounds medieval!"

"Medieval! Simply one of Andersen's frightful stories or *The Arabian Nights*, the writer said, shrugging his shoulders.

I must say, all I saw there appears to me now, while I am writing these lines, like a nightmare.

CHAPTER IV.

Nightmares

BEFORE dinner the Lett sailor Abash, with another Red Guard, a short man in a round cap—burst into our cell. Later I used often to see his face in the awful hours of night. I was struck by the glazed immobile look of his eyes, with greatly enlarged pupils, and the pallor of his face. I had noticed the same in the other executioners. I heard there was a great abuse of cocaine in the "Tchrezvychaika." You could obtain many favours from this rabble by means of a few grams of the brilliant white powder. It was under its influence that the fate of men was decided and they were despatched into a better world. Abash, in whom I recognised the sailor who made the requisition in my house, came staggering into the cell, and his cruel colourless little eyes scanned the prisoners' faces in turn.

"Which of you is a landowner. Who owns land?" he shouted.

Two men answered the call. They both were German colonists, respectable-looking old men. They had been brought two days earlier, and as yet had not been questioned, nor accused of anything. Each had some twenty to thirty dessiatinas of land, which they had cultivated with their own hands for the last fifty years.

"Your names!" shouted Abash. "You write down their names," he told the Red Guard. The latter started scribbling the names of the Germans with a bit of pencil on a scrap of paper, which he held against the wall. He was swaying visibly. Having written the names, Abash and his companion left the room as noisily as they entered it, and we soon heard them shouting and swearing in the neighbouring cell.

An ominous silence fell upon us all.

"Why did you answer?" Mironin asked the Germans sadly.

"Why not?" one of them replied gravely. "They asked who of us owned land; we told the truth. Why should we lie? They are bound to know. And what should we fear"

We have not been questioned; there is no accusation against us!"

"How stupid, how unutterably stupid it is to perish in such a way!" lamented Mironin gently.

"Do you think that is the reason why their names were written down?" whispered Piotrovsky. "Tell me, had I to answer too? I have no land of my own; I am only a bailiff."

"Certainly not, why should you? And they should not have done so either. What is this, indeed, this investigation by two drunken, illiterate scoundrels?"

An hour later, soon after dinner, we again heard noisy steps along the passage. Gadis appeared with a list in his hands, accompanied by Abash, the same Red Guard, and the chief of the guard. Passing through our cell, they entered the adjoining one. Gadis began calling out the names of the prisoners, and, among others, I heard him call out General Ebyeloff's name.

"Shall I take my things with me?" inquired the General.

"No, there's no need at present," replied Gadis, "you will fetch them later on."

"So I am to be released," said Ebyeloff excitedly.

"Yes . . . I suppose. . . . There are a few formalities to be performed yet. . . . Well, make haste, get a move on. . . ."

I was near the door of our cell when the General passed. He was joyfully excited, and hastily whispered to us "Well, you see . . . they said released. I thought so; I have never done any harm. . . . I am already 65. . . . Good-bye, my friends, God grant we may meet yet. . . ."

An hour later the same executioners came to fetch his things. Up to the last moment the General believed in the final triumph of his innocence. . . .

Gadis reappeared in the course of the evening, and ordered all the cells to be locked.

"And nobody is to go out, not even into the lavatory," he shouted to the sentry. A feeling of suffocating terror took hold of us: even the usual evening conversations were hushed.

All lay down upon their boards, crushed, half-mad. Conversations were carried on in whispers, and whenever steps

were heard in the passage everyone started and turned towards the door. Twice the door opened that night. The first time Gadis and his followers came in and called out the names of the two German colonists. They rose quietly, without haste, crossed themselves, and kissed each other.

"Good-bye, gentlemen," said one of them firmly, shaking hands with those near him. Several hands were extended with passionate sympathy.

"Well, what are you all stirring for, you scum?" furiously yelled the Red Guard in the astrakhan cap. "Back to your places! If anyone lifts his head I will hit it with my rifle-butt."

They were led off. The second time the door opened to let in Abash, Volodka, and the Red Guard, intoxicated with blood and wine. Abash was rolling leaden, lifeless eyes and saying in a thick voice :

"Commissary . . . hand over the things of the Germans. . . . Yes, and see that nothing is missing, you hear, or you know. . . . "

The cell commissary handed over the things with shaking hands. "And bread, they had white bread, the scoundrels," insisted Volodka, "where is the bread? . . . take care, don't hide anything, because we have kept an account."

Having obtained the things they went into the passage, where they proceeded to divide them.

Soon the quarrels and swearing ceased. An oppressive silence reigned. Some slept fitfully, sleep coming as a reaction after the stormy events of that night. Many talked in their sleep and tossed about. . . . Others lay with open eyes till the morning. From outside one heard the sentry's song :

"Apple, whither are you rolling ? "

Once you get into the tche-ka you will not return !

CHAPTER V.

The Red Terror

THREE prisoners were brought back to our cell from the prison. All three were quite young men. They were accused of having taken a bribe of 20,000 roubles from a person well known in Odessa, while searching that house. These three men, as well as their case, deserve our notice. The first (Kolesnikov) had been an agent of the Criminal Investigation Department, and a very able one, too. Owing to his investigations the abuses of the famous Dombrovsky, Commandant of Odessa, were disclosed. Risking his life daily, he was constantly tracking down the Odessa criminals. His activity had attracted the attention of the criminal world, and the robbers had been waiting for an opportunity to rid themselves of their dangerous foe.

The second was a young painter, Kisleiko by name. While serving in the military administration he had been told off to search a house harbouring thieves. Kisleiko asked a young engineer, Edward—or as his friends called him, Dick Lunevsky—to accompany him as a witness. Lunevsky, good-looking, with a feminine softness and attractiveness, was accused merely of having assisted at this search, which had yielded no results.

The agent Kolesnikov denied his guilt, pointing out, very logically, that since nothing suspicious had been discovered there was no reason to take a bribe. The Criminal Investigation Department gave Kolesnikov a very good character. Kisleiko—a stubborn Ukrainian—refused to give any explanations. Lunevsky told the whole story frankly and truthfully. The person whose premises had been searched had some private grudge against Kisleiko's fiancée. Wishing to punish her, Kisleiko, having received unfavourable information concerning the lady from Kolesnikov, seized the opportunity to verify it. But, as the search had no results, Kisleiko, uncautiously, tore up the report. As Lunevsky explained later, Kisleiko did this because his fiancée's name was mentioned in the paper. Having no possibility of settling accounts with the elusive Kolesnikov, the bandits sent their agents to Mrs. X. to demand money from her

in Kolesnikov's name. X. complained to the "Tchrezvychaikas," and all three got arrested.

Such is the summary of the story. All three were excited. They inquired nervously about the fate of persons transferred here from prison. Having been told of their execution, the three young men were in despair. They were busy all day writing farewell letters to their relatives: Lunevsky and Kolesnikov to their wives, and Kisleiko to his fiancée.

In the afternoon I was taken to the Investigation Agent at Zhdanov's house, No. 8. I found myself in a small room overlooking the yard. Here I met several men transferred that morning from the prison, among them Baron Stengel. He had changed considerably, was unshaven, and his hair was long and grey. Straight from prison he was brought here, with his belongings. The Baron was cheerful. In his conversation he expressed the hope that his sufferings were at an end at last, and that he would soon be free.

"Otherwise, I should not have been brought here," he argued. "Don't you think so? It is still day, so, if I were to be shot, they would have imprisoned me in a cell. There is also no reason to question me, as the investigation is ended."

"What an idea—to be shot!" said his neighbour, by whose carriage one could guess he was a former soldier. "Of course, it is a good sign that you were brought here. Probably they will hand you your papers and release you."

A sailor came in. "Which of you is Baron Stengel?" he asked.

"I am," replied the Baron.

"You are released. You will be let out directly."

The Baron pressed both his hands upon his throbbing heart. His face turned deathly pale from joyous excitement. He crossed himself devoutly. "Oh, good Lord," he whispered. "I was expecting it, and yet, when I heard the word 'release,' my heart seemed to stop beating."

The Baron was congratulated, everyone shook hands with him, and he started to unpack his things swiftly, and distribute bread, sausage, and other provisions to his comrades in misfortune. Then he walked round, giving away cigarettes from his bulky case.

"I will leave myself one for the journey," he said gaily, finishing the distribution. He seemed to have got taller somehow. . . .

Another sailor came in. "Is Baron Stengel here?"

"Yes, yes—here I am. . . . Are we going?"

"Yes, you are to be released. . . . Just wait one moment more."

Some ten minutes later Abash and the first sailor came in.

"Baron Stengel," called out the sailor, "please!"

"Am I to take my things?"

"Your things . . . not just yet."

A slight shadow of anxiety flitted over the Baron's face. But he recovered immediately and nodded smilingly to us.

"Probably to fetch my papers at the Commandant's," he said, in leaving the room.

I went up to the window. The Baron was led out through the door leading to the gateway. He turned towards the gate, intending to go in the direction of the Square. But the sailor motioned him to go into the yard. For a second the Baron stopped and looked up. Our eyes met. In his I seemed to read an ominous presentiment. He turned slowly and followed the sailor. When the latter stopped before the door of a cellar the Baron appeared to shrivel up. His head sunk, one of his hands grasped his hair, the other was pressed to his breast, and he disappeared through the door of the fatal cellar. The engine of a lorry was started suddenly, making a deafening noise, and through it I thought I heard the sound of a shot. . . .

I was not questioned, but sent back to my cell. Why had I been called. . . . I do not know. . . .

That same night Demianov, Zusovich, Kalf, Burnstein, and Kaminer—all perfectly innocent—were executed. The latter's execution produced the strongest impression. He was a well-known philanthropist, without limits to his charity, mourned by scores of families whom he had helped. He was executed for being "a merchant." No other accusation could be found, even by the executioners, past masters as they are in the art of inventing lies.

The same night Baranov, a lawyer, remote from any politics, a kind, noble man, who in all his life had harmed no one, was executed too. Young Streltzov, a student of

twenty-two years old, perished with them. He was shot because he had been found in possession of a revolver. He met his fate with rare courage. A few days before his execution, knowing the fate that awaited him, he wrote home detailed instructions how to provide for his young wife's future. In this letter he asked his wife not to wear mourning for him and not to look for his body: "Our bodies are thrown into such dreadful places that it would be better for you to remain in ignorance of them," he wrote to her.

The Red Terror, senseless, revoltingly cruel, enclosed us in its bloody pale.

CHAPTER VI.

Hope

RUMOURS reached us concerning labour troubles. We learned that meetings of protest against the Red Terror were held at the "Ropit" works.

A faint hope filled the prisoners' hearts. All news from outside was eagerly sought for. Everyone spoke of the significance of a Labour movement. Will the Communists dare to oppose it? If such be the case, on whom will they be able to rely, on what public opinion? The writer shook his head incredulously.

"They do not want public opinion. As long as they have bayonets they will rely on them."

"Yes," said Mironin, "but recall the words of Purishkevich's counsel at the Moscow Tribunal: 'One can lean on a bayonet, but one cannot *sit* on it.'"

"Well, what does that matter to us? Abash, Volodka & Co. will continue to wear our things until the Bolsheviks want to 'sit,' *i.e.* to establish something in the nature of State administration."

And, indeed, hope soon gave way to disappointment. One evening several scores of Menshevik workmen were arrested. Many were released, but the leaders remained. Among the latter I recognised Kuliabko-Korezki. He was imprisoned in the cell for hostages.

The Menshevik Social-Revolutionary R——tal and the well-known Anarchist Ch——avsky were also arrested. These two were placed in a special room provided for the members of the "Tchrezvychaikas." Nevertheless, our optimists were not disheartened.

"It seems to me," said Dick Lunevsky, "that the arrest of Menshevik leaders is a good thing. It will increase the workmen's irritation and stir them to more energetic action. In other words, the worse it is, the better for our cause. The tighter the cord is strained the sooner will it break."

"That will happen in the end," sadly answered Mironin, "but I am afraid that we here will not witness it."

"There has been no 'money changing' for nearly a week, however," remarked Kisleiko.

"Yes, but it is possible that it is only a lull before the storm," returned the writer.

The rumour of the abolition of the death penalty continued to spread in the Commission. No other victims were shot. Quieter days followed. The madness and terror that threatened us gradually dispersed. The hope of better things awoke and grew within us. At this time the attitude of the administration towards us underwent a great change. Gadis altered greatly. His vulgar shouts were heard less frequently. The chief "money changers" appeared more seldom within the walls of the "Tche-ka." The prisoners enjoyed greater freedom. They walked in the yard and in the corridors without any Red Guard escort. But the food question grew more acute. The dearth of foodstuffs reached its utmost limit. Gadis allowed us to send Volodka shopping. Usually Mironin and the writer organised the whole purchase. Money, some five to six thousand roubles, was collected in all the cells, including the women's. Each cell sent a list of its requisites, then a general list was written out and entrusted to Volodka with the money. Volodka fulfilled the mission very willingly. First of all he received the legalised 10 per cent. for his pains; and, secondly, he robbed and cheated us in the most shameless way, especially with the bread—that most precious item. Usually Volodka obtained an order for the purchase of a certain quantity of loaves at a fixed price from the economic department. By this order it was possible to buy bread for Rs. 50 per lb., whereas the price in the town was Rs. 120 to Rs. 130 per lb.

In his bills Volodka charged us from Rs. 50 to Rs. 150 for the bread he had bought for us. He increased this figure somewhat, and for the whole purchase, costing 6,000 to 7,000 roubles, and consisting in a bag of bread and cucumbers (not quite full), he would add Rs. 200 for a cab. Hunger made us submit to this hideous extortion, by means of which every time Volodka "earned" two to three thousand roubles.

At that time Mironin had been elected by us cell commissary (the chief commissary, Zakler, was appointed by the authorities—such was the tradition). A straightforward man, and very hot-tempered, Mironin could not stand this shameless extortion, and decided to take energetic measures.

He noticed that more than half of the prisoners' parcels disappeared into the pockets of the guards, who, headed by Volodka, insolently confiscated the lion's share of each parcel, storing it in a large bag, which, at the end of the distribution, was filled to the top. Part of its contents was forthwith sold to the prisoners at fabulous prices, the other part serving to supply the Red Guards with a succulent supper. Zakler took part in those suppers. If the question of the parcel-distribution could be regulated it would not have been necessary to recur to Volodka's services so often. Mironin took the risk of addressing himself directly to Gadis, who was entrusted with the administration of the prison department. Warmly he described to him the painful situation of the prisoners, whose families often sold their last belongings in order to bring some bread to their dear ones. Everyone was surprised at the sympathy with which Gadis received Mironin's words.

When the next distribution of parcels came he ordered all the cell commissaries to assist, and, addressing himself to Volodka, shouted :

"If you, d—— you, dare to rob them of a crumb I'll shoot you with my own hands. Possibly the wife may be selling her last clothes to bring her husband bread, and you take it. Do you not get enough to eat, you swine? You stuff all day long."

"They won't get anything, the 'bourgeois,'" grumbled Volodka; however, he only sneaked a tart sent to the Germans, and from that day the shameless plundering of the parcels ceased. In our miserable existence that even produced a good impression. These three weeks brought really a little respite in the nightmare of our existence.

In the meanwhile I made the acquaintance of many of the prisoners. Among them I met many I knew before. M. Eremeieff, an honorary justice of the peace, accused of counter-revolution, released, re-arrested and kept as hostage, was with us. He was imprisoned because his brother, absent from Odessa, had large wine stores there. I recollect the agreeable personality of the commissary of the fourteenth "bourgeois" cell—Professor Vilinsky—tireless in his efforts for the welfare of his electors. The commissary of another cell, the universally beloved I. I. Volchanetzky, was full of

the same kindness. I also met the famous Dr. T——m. Many legends surrounded his name, and he was a very mysterious person. An Austrian student and a political refugee from Austria, he had moved in European Socialistic circles, played some part in Moscow among Bolshevists, and, as he asserted, had been a member of the Moscow Communist Party. In Odessa he used to call himself the chairman of the International Red Cross Society. It is known that he betrayed a whole group of persons connected with the Red Cross. These persons, accused of Zionism, were imprisoned in the "Tchrezvychaikas," together with Dr. T——m. Our writer called him definitely a provocator.

Dr. T——m told me that a wire had been sent to Trotsky about his arrest, and that the latter had once given him as a "souvenir" a small gold badge, in the shape of a red star, which he wore on his watch-chain.

"I am far from thinking that they will dare execute me here," said T——m. "Though the local commissaries do not know me, I am very popular in the North. I am awaiting an answer from Moscow."

T——m's wife, whom he married nine days before his arrest, was imprisoned in the women's cell. Their relations were openly hostile. Representatives of the Supreme Socialistic Inspection came to verify the legality of our imprisonment. This was a considerable concession to the demands of the workmen, indignant at the executions without trial of their brother workmen. There was a rumour that executions in the "Tchrezvychaikas" would cease, that trials would be obligatory, that a commission of workmen and socialist inspectors would inspect the lists of prisoners. Days passed, but no commission appeared. Only a few inspectors visited us. One of these was comrade Irene, a middle-aged woman with a faded, tired face. She smoked a good deal and listened patiently to the prisoners' complaints, some of which she wrote down on a scrap of paper. She was indignant at hearing of the rough treatment, endless swearing and blows. "I will report. I will take steps," she declared. "It is revolting, in a socialist prison!"

"In a socialist prison!" whispered Mironin into my ear

ironically. "As if it were possible to talk about socialism or any ideals here!"

There was another inspector, a tall, very young student. He would sit down on the bench near the table and listen indifferently to the tearful complaints of my comrades.

"All right," he interrupted them, "I will verify everything, and if anyone is illegally detained he will be released, though personally I am convinced that 99 per cent. of you are guilty."

Mironin was visibly nettled. Though the writer tried to stop him, he came up to the table and asked drily: "You say 99 per cent. are guilty? And if I told you that the percentage of those released from here is over 60 per cent. of all the prisoners? And I think the idea of accusing the 'Tchrezvychaika' of undue leniency would not occur to anyone."

The inspector, disdaining to reply, rose. Mironin persisted: "I wanted to tell you, the representative of the supreme legal control, that, in spite of the decrees, I have been here for three weeks without any accusation having been handed me. What is going to happen?"

"What?" replied the student, with unconcern, "you will be shot, or transferred to prison, or, possibly, released."

"Thanks!" Mironin bowed ironically. "It was useless to address myself to a member of the socialistic inspection in order to hear these truths. Any executioner could tell me the same."

"I do not wish to speak with you," shouted the inspector rudely, and left the cell.

"How hot-tempered you are," we reproached Mironin, "you will get into trouble."

"I am doomed, as it is," he retorted stubbornly. "And I hate to see you pouring out your troubles to such miserable puppies. They only pretend to listen to you, nobody reads your letters and petitions."

In the evening Mironin and I went into the yard. One of the investigation agents was standing near the window of the guard-room. He called up Mironin, whom he knew: "Comrade Mironin, come here for a moment." Mironin went up. I stood a few paces away and heard the agent, bending down, say quickly: "Comrade Mironin, I must give

you bad news. You are sentenced to be shot. Take all steps. If you can escape. Unfortunately, I can do nothing for you. I scarcely dare speak with you. Have courage!"

I came up swiftly to Mironin. His face was quite white, and he could scarcely stand. Seeing me, he smiled feebly, and squeezed my hand.

"There, you heard. I knew it," he said.

What consolation could I give him? He lay upon his couch without moving for a few hours with open eyes. When he got up I thought his face wore a strange look. Extremely pale, it seemed to be petrified in the contemplation of something very deep and important. The eyes looked seriously and attentively.

"It's nothing," he whispered, "if only there is no delay."

CHAPTER VII.

Following Days

KRJIJANOVSKY finished his picture upon the subject "The Red Star will shine over the World." It was painted in ordinary distemper on an ordinary blackboard, and represented the sun rising over the sea. In the background of the sea a fiery red star was rising from the sea. On the right side the picture was a bare cliff washed by the sea, and on the left an old tree was coming to life under the warmth of the red rays. Its branches were stretching out towards the star and were covered with young, green shoots.

Kalenichenko came to see the picture. He stood a long time over it, and in the evening our friend, the painter, was called out to be released.

"Get your things ready," said the pleasant chief of the guard, who was called Abrasha, "only don't take any notes from the prisoners. Try to recollect their messages to transmit verbally, or else you may be sent back, like that colonel, and 'cashed.'"

Later on I heard about that case. An elderly retired colonel was imprisoned in one of the cells. He was released. Being a kind fellow, he had gathered some scores of letters from the prisoners to transmit to their families. Before he left he was searched, the letters were found, and the same evening he was shot.

We all parted warmly from our dear artist. We were joyfully excited and animated. Abrasha was hurrying him.

"Enough! You will meet again when you are free. The released prisoners are ready downstairs; if you are late you may be sent back."

"Farewell, farewell," Krjijanovsky was saying, "God grant we may meet again." He left. The prisoners' eyes followed him. All crowded to the windows and looked into the yard, where our friend stood among the released prisoners.

Mironin also took part in the general jubilation. He seemed to have forgotten about himself, and was nodding to his friend through the windows. But when the happy group

released from our inferno disappeared through the gateway his eyes got dim again and resumed the expression of deep, inner contemplation which I had noticed previously. And, as was his wont, he walked nervously up and down the cell, avoiding to speak to his comrades.

I noticed that his hair had turned very grey since last night.

"What has happened to our Mironin?" asked the writer.

I only shrugged my shoulders, Mironin having asked me not to speak to the others of what I had overheard in the yard.

"It is useless to upset them," he explained. "Somehow they are so kindly disposed towards me."

Every day new prisoners were brought in. Many had been released during that time. Once a youth of nineteen to twenty, with a closely shaven head and face, apparently a Jew, came in. He was dressed in a smart brown tunic, his breeches were tucked into elegant high boots. Coming into the cell, he approached the student, a "tche-ka" official (whom I mentioned in the first chapter), laughing loudly.

"Good-morning, Yasha," said R——tsky, our new comrade. "Just think, Senka (the Praesidium Secretary) has arrested me for my long tongue," he said. "Liza brought me to this. 'How long,' I asked, shall I remain?"

"But what are you accused of?" asked Yasha.

"Just what I cannot understand myself. This is what happened. One day I came to the "Tchrezvychaikas" to see Senia and the others. They say to me: 'R——tsky, you know Zusovich's family?' 'Yes,' I answered, 'I do.' 'Do you know that Zusovich is alive? He has not been shot, he has been hidden by us in a safe place. If his family will give 500,000 roubles we will release him.' 'Is that blackmail?' I asked. 'Blackmail? You may give the money into the hands of a third party. Someone you trust. When Zusovich is released and put on board a French torpedo-boat, then the money may be entrusted to you.' 'Well, of course, I ran off immediately to Zusovich's family and told them the story. His poor wife fainted with joy. They began collecting the money. One hundred and fifty thousand roubles were given to a third party. I was told to tell

my "Tchrezvychaika" friends that so far 150,000 roubles had been collected, more would be obtained, though it was feared that 500,000 roubles could not be gathered. I returned to the Praesidium and met Liza. I told her that I must see So-and-so about the Zusovich affair. She began questioning me about it. I told her, though, I was sure that she was also interested in the business, and only pretended to know nothing about it. I got no definite answer that day, and on the next the house of L——, the third party, who had the money, was searched, 150,000 roubles found, and L—— and I were arrested. He is also imprisoned here. And I was arrested by these same Senia and Liza. Why? I cannot understand. I had been sent by them to negotiate with the Zusoviches, and arrested by them. They laugh, saying my tongue is too long. I simply wanted to do a kind action. Why not save a man if one can do it? Personally, I had no interest in the affair; I was to pass over all the money to them.'"

"And Zusovich is alive?" the writer asked.

"I do not know. The whole town is talking of it to-day. Of course, the 'tche-ka' has published in the papers that it is a case of blackmail; that Zusovich has been shot a long time ago."

"How dreadful," said the writer to Mironin. "You just imagine what that unfortunate family must have endured. First, the papers spoke of his execution. Possibly they had suffered and had got reconciled to their loss. Then those people were made to live through a new period of joyful excitement in hearing he was alive, and might still be saved. And then comes this new blow, not to speak of the loss of 150,000 roubles. Say what you like, but this surpasses all the tortures of the Inquisition!"

"It seems a very shady affair," said Mironin pensively; "it is very likely that then Zusovich was alive; possibly he may be alive even at this moment. But now of course he will be murdered."

R——tsky turned out to be a very fussy fellow: a kind, good-hearted boy, but very expansive, noisy and vivacious, trying everyone's nerves sorely. To each separately and to all collectively he told his case in a humorous way, laying stress on his intimate friendship with the "Tchrezvychaika"

chiefs, and invariably ended his chatter with the question: "Well, and how long shall I be imprisoned for a 'long tongue'?"

He often ran about the yard, chatting through the window with the agents he knew. He used to get some news out of them and rush off immediately to impart it to us. When the news concerned somebody's release, he would run into the cell with noisy glee to tell his good news. R——tsky had another peculiarity: he was always munching something all day long. Where he used to get food from was a mystery. Once I found him eating soup out of the same bowl as the Red Guards, another time he managed to get the dinner which was sent to the "Tchrezvychaika" agents. And he was always saying that he had not eaten anything the whole day. I cannot picture him otherwise than with a tomato or cucumber in his hand. In the course of the day he must have devoured at least a score of these.

Several persons were released in the course of the next few days, among them Skachinsky and the writer. It moves me still to recollect the touching leave-taking of Mironin and his friend. Mironin was parting from him *for ever*. "When you are free come at once to see me," said the writer. "You know my address."

Silently Mironin embraced him. After the writer had left he got into his corner and his eyes filled with tears.

In the evening Volodka and Abash came: they called for Mironin. I can never forget those awful moments. Mironin started, became still paler and looked round at us in a helpless way. I pressed his hand convulsively.

"It's nothing, nothing," whispered Mironin; "all will be over soon."

Sobs choked me. I embraced this man to whom I had become so deeply attached.

"You are probably going to be questioned," Mironin's comrades said to him sympathisingly. "You will soon be free."

"Good-bye, friends!" said Mironin gently, leaving the room.

Hours passed. The inmates of the cell commented on Mironin's long absence and became anxious. Night came on, the guard was changed, the order to go to bed was

shouted out, and we all lay down on our benches. Anxiety for Mironin's fate was replaced by a dreadful certainty. "Is it possible that he has perished? What for? Without any accusation?"

"Perhaps he was called into the office to fill up lists," somebody remarked.

Many clutched at that hope. One wants so much to believe in something good. Little by little all became quiet and the prisoners fell asleep. I could not close my eyes. I alone knew the horrible truth. Never shall I forget what followed. In the course of the night the door opened and I saw Mironin on the threshold. Fearing it was a hallucination, I screamed and stretched out my hands towards the ghost.

But the latter, swaying and moving slowly, came up to me.

"Do not fear, friend, it is I. I have been reprieved," he said in a week voice. "But, oh, God! what I have lived through. It is worse than death!"

He sank down on the boards by my side. I embraced him, pressed his hands, not being able to express my joy. When he recovered, Mironin told me his story.

"I was brought into No. 8, a cell where four others were waiting too. I do not know where they came from, but I had not seen them here. They were called out one after the other into the yard. The motor-engine was making a dreadful noise all the time; it had been set going when the first prisoner was brought out. When the report of a shot reached us one of those who had remained behind began rushing about the room. He ran from one of us to another, begging for poison, imploring to be killed. He screamed in a hysterical way: 'Mania, Mania, let me bid her farewell. Let me kiss her just once more.' The others, like myself, sat crushed with horror, silent, white as the walls of that room. We avoided looking at each other, and when my eyes met those of my comrades I read in them only an animal submissiveness to fate. Soon even that unfortunate creature became quieter, and, overwhelmed by his misfortune, he sank on a low bench, hiding his face in his hands, and remained thus until he was called.

"I cannot describe my feelings. My head became as heavy as lead. I felt as if inside me there was a vast empti-

ness. Somewhere, in a remote corner of my brain, I became conscious that soon I should be no more. Soon I would step over that mysterious boundary which divides life from death. For one moment I even felt a kind of curiosity what I should find *there*, and then again I sank into a stupefied indifference. Only when one of us was called out my blood seemed to flow away from my heart. I felt a nasty salt taste in my mouth. All four were led out and shot; I alone remained. The engine stopped. Still, I never doubted that the same fate awaited me.

. . . . . .

"How long I remained in that dreadful expectation I cannot remember; at the last I became half-unconscious. Suddenly the door opened and somebody called out my name. My breath stopped. I was brought into the passage and was met by the investigation agent who had spoken to me that day in the yard. He shook my hand convulsively: 'Well, I congratulate you at the last moment, you have been finally reprieved. Your case will be transferred to the Law Court. Once more I congratulate you.' That's my story," ended Mironin.

"I can imagine what a sensation of the joy of living you must have."

"No," said Mironin quietly, "I only feel a terrible weakness and fatigue." And lying down, he fell asleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Secrets of the Cellar. Abash's Stories

MIRONIN woke up late and got up joyous and animated. He made me think of a man coming out into the fresh air for the first time after a painful and protracted illness.

"Birds are singing in your soul," I said, "I feel so happy for you."

He squeezed my hand gratefully. From that day Mironin resumed his duties as cell commissary with a new energy. Zakler was transferred to prison. He gathered his belongings quickly into a huge bag and disappeared without saying good-bye to anyone. I was told that he had come here with empty hands. Is it surprising that after his departure many of us missed something? Mironin missed his penknife, which was a great loss for us all, as knives were confiscated in the "Tchrezvychaika," and for the whole cell we had only two. Zakler also carried off somebody's small looking-glass which he had borrowed "for five minutes." Later I heard he remained in prison only a few days and had frequent intercourse with "Tchrezvychaika" agents. We all breathed more freely when he left us.

L——tzky was appointed in Zakler's place. Quiet, amiable, with a pleasant, sad face, L——tzky, a former cadet, had been sentenced to death a long time ago, but for some reason the execution had been postponed. He knew it, and was very unhappy. I seem to see his sad, pleasant smile. It was said that Kalenichenko felt some sympathy for him, therefore he was always postponing the execution. A few days previously Lisetsky told us that, going to fetch bread in No. 8, he met Kalenichenko, who smiled and said: "Do not worry; you will come to no harm."

This incident gave L——tzky some faint hope. Old Piotrovsky was called out to be questioned. He returned very much upset, and told Mironin the details of his case. Piotrovsky was about seventy years of age. He had managed a large estate in the Odessa district. When the Germans were in power and the landowners were being indemnified for their losses, Piotrovsky pointed out that the precious library, valued at one million roubles, had been

plundered and destroyed. Though the peasants were not made to pay, nevertheless Piotrovsky was accused of persecuting and robbing them in the interests of the landowners, etc. After the investigation the agent told him: "Men like you should be hanged like dogs!

Mironin tried to soothe the old man, wrote some sort of explanation for him, said that the executions had stopped, that for three weeks no one had been taken into No. 8. But to me he said: "This old man merely confirmed the fact of the disappearance of the property as a witness. As he had been entrusted with its care he could not but report to the owners. There is nothing wrong in his act; anyone can see that. Still, I fear his fate is sealed."

The same evening we were startled by an unusual noise and shouts in the yard. We all rushed to the windows, and saw the following scene. Abash, roaring drunk, stood in the middle of the yard. Though we scarcely ever saw him quite sober, to-day he had evidently overstepped the limit of intoxication. He was brandishing his revolver and threatening to shoot all who approached him. Abash was surrounded by a crowd of "Tchrezvychaika" officials—sailors, guards, and even agents. They were all afraid of the ruffian, and were trying to calm him by every means. They threatened him with the advent of Kalenichenko, implored, embraced, and even kissed him. The name of Kalenichenko infuriated him still more.

"I have 'cashed' hundreds and thousands," shouted Abash, "and will shoot your Kalenichenko and all of you into the bargain; I fear no one. Let Trotsky himself come here!"

Caresses and kisses had a softening effect upon the drunken executioner. He began lamenting his lot, and wept aloud, opening his mouth wide. His sobs were heard all over the yard. But he obstinately refused to go to bed. At last, with the utmost difficulty, he was coaxed into one of the spare rooms and locked in. Soon, however, the whole building was shaking from the kicks and blows which Abash showered upon the door of his prison. Seeing that this had no effect, he started shooting out of the window. Then negotiations were resumed. He was told that Kalenichenko had ordered him to stay under arrest until he was sober, when

he would be released. Abash, who was partially sobered by his violent physical exertions, compromised. He consented to remain until the morning, but not in solitude; he demanded to be transferred to the common cell.

"If I am guilty, comrades, please, I am ready to stay," Abash said. "I have nothing against it. Only I cannot stay without company. In company I am quite ready."

So he was brought into our cell. He sat down with a broad grin on his flat face and mumbled, "Don't fear me, comrades. I will not hurt you. Though you are condemned, still you are human beings. If any of you is guilty, for instance, of counter-revolution or any other crime, I will 'cash' him! I have a sure hand, presto! and it's done. But have no fear. To-day Abash is on the spree. I am a Muscovite, and you will all have a feast. Because you are human beings after all. And I do not care what the expense will be. What is money? I have money to burn!"

He drew out a thick wad of Ukrainian fifty-rouble notes.

"Here's money! If that is not enough I will get more. Sentry, friend," roared Abash. He entered into a lengthy conversation with the sentry concerning the purchase of brandy and provisions.

"You fool, I will stand you some brandy, and when I 'cash' some one I will take off his suit of clothes and give it to you—the smartest—may God kill me if I don't!" said Abash.

These parleys resulted in one of the Red Guards going to fetch wine and food. In an hour he brought three bottles of brandy and a lot of bread, tinned food, bacon, and cucumbers, having spent upon the purchase all the eight thousand roubles given him by Abash. The latter melted completely.

"Come here all of you dear condemned," he lisped. "Eat and drink. Don't be afraid. Abash is on the spree. You are also human beings, though, of course, those who are counter-revolutionaries, it's all up with them. My hand will not shake. But, in general, I am a just man. Why should I not stand you a treat? Come, come here, comrades!"

Seeing our hesitation he got angry. "What? you despise me, you . . . I tell you, I invite you!"

Many came up to the table; a few Red Guards came in too. Abash drank some brandy from the bottle, and passed it to his neighbours. He soon became quite sociable. In his broken Lettish-Russian, interspersed with Moscow expressions (he had lived many years there), Abash, lisping and stuttering in short, uncouth sentences, told us many of the secrets of the famous cellar in Zhdanov's house. I will not repeat his stories word for word. Their cynicism cannot be described, but, roughly, this is what he told us. The shooting took place in the cellar of No. 8; sometimes also in the shed. Large parties of condemned, in view of the Red Terror, had been taken out of town in a lorry, and there they had to dig their own graves. At first, when the Odessa "Tchrezvychaika" was taking its first timid steps on its bloody path, the executions were carried out in the most awful and revoltingly cynical way. The condemned man would be brought into the lavatory, his head bent over the basin, and a shot fired right into the back of the head. The dead body would be held over the basin until all the blood had run down; then the water was turned on.

Later on, when the "Tchrezvychaika" became powerful and the slaughter carried on there was no more a secret, the executions were carried out in batches of forty to fifty men a night in the cellar and shed. During these executions the engine of a lorry was set going. The noise partially covered the victim's cries and the revolver shots. The condemned were led out separately, sometimes in pairs. In the cellar they had to undress, taking off their boots and upper clothing, their shirts too; sometimes they were killed by a revolver shot in the back of the head, but occasionally in the forehead. Frequently the executions were preceded by tortures. Besides the special executioners, "amateurs" took part in the shooting, attracted not only by a sadist perversion, but also by the "fees." Abash assured us that the "Tchrezvychaika" paid the executioner 1,000 roubles for every victim; he also received the victim's belongings.

From other official sources I heard that the fees were only 250 roubles, though possibly they have been raised since. Among the above-mentioned "amateurs" Abash referred to a girl of seventeeen, an agent of the "Tchrezvychaika." She was known for her awful cruelty and mockery of the victims.

Gadis, Volodka, and even E——ov, who was entrusted with the house administration, took an active part in those executions. The latter told me one day that he had shot Dr. T——m, whom I mentioned in the preceding chapter, with his own hand. But even among this group of scoundrels one of them was distinguished for his outstanding cruelty—it was a member of the praesidium. I often saw him. He had been a Moscow student, and had a long, thin pale face, with a sharp nose and dark, fine eyes, that seemed to pierce one through. According to Abash's words, V——n executed a man gradually. He would sit down, facing his victim, and would start questioning him.

"An officer?" V——n would shut an eye, and pulling the trigger of his revolver, would break his victim's hand.

"Perhaps a colonel?" and the bullet would pierce the elbow.

"Better not to get into that man's power," said Abash. "He'd take half an hour. Shoot, shoot, and sniff cocaine and smoke."

Later on this V——n was appointed chief of the Army "Extraordinary Commission" at the Front. His secretary spoke of him with admiration: "A most gifted man. He tries, sentences, and executes a man himself on the spot. A wonderful man!"

A man?

From other stories told by Abash, and verified later by me, I heard the details concerning the deaths of General Fedorenka and Count Roniker. These victims died proudly, like heroes. Here are the details of Count Roniker's execution. When the Red Terror was declared he was transferred from prison to the "Tchrezvychaika." In the afternoon he was called out, told that he was free, and allowed to take his things. Calm and handsome, the Count came out, carrying his bag and rug. Lifting his hat politely, he asked one of the sailors:

"Will you allow me to call a cab?"

"A cab?" the man replied; "why not? Give us the money."

The Count gave the sailor 200 roubles. Five minutes later he was told to follow his guard. Coming out of the gate he inquired after the cab. One of the men laughed outright.

"You want a cab? Never mind, you can get *there* without a cab. We will bring you there."

The Count pressed his lips tightly together and followed his executioners. They passed through the square to Zhdanov's house, and there he was led towards the famous cellar in the yard. His things were taken away from him, and he was ordered to turn his face to the wall.

"Why?" said the Count with dignity. "I do not know how *you* feel, but *I* can look straight into anyone's eyes. Shoot!"

Thus died Count Roniker.

General Fedorenko met his fate with the same dignity. He had been for a long time in the "Tchrezvychaika," and his son, a boy of seventeen, was with him. They were imprisoned in separate cells. In the evening drunken men came to fetch the General; he understood. Taking from his neck a small ikon, and turning towards his neighbour, Borhudarianz, solicitor and officer, General Fedorenko said:

"Give this with my blessing to my boy. Good-bye!" The two embraced.

"Hurry up, you! Get a move on!" shouted a sailor.

The General replied firmly: "Don't hurry, you will have the time to divide my belongings. I know where I am to be led, and go with a peaceful conscience, as I have never done anyone any harm, and am dying at the hands of scoundrels."

The next day Fedorenko asked Borhudarianz:

"Why is Dad sleeping so long?"

"Dad is no more," the other replied, "be brave, dear boy. Dad was taken last night and has not returned."

"They have murdered him!" cried the poor boy, sobbing convulsively. Later I saw the little ikon—his martyred father's last blessing—upon the boy's neck.

Many workmen were executed. They all died with a calm contempt for their executioners. One of them said, before dying, "You are bandits. Shoot as many of us workmen as you like. At least our comrades will have their eyes opened all the sooner, and they will sweep your filthy Government from off the earth."

The details of the case of Kleitman, a Communist and former commissary of the Odessa harbour, are likewise

interesting. He was accused of having sold 70,000 roubles' worth of Government leather. In reality the leather had been stolen by his subordinates, Kleitman himself being a very honest man. Many proofs of his honesty exist. Thus when Elisavetgrad was occupied by Grigorief's troops Kleitman brought to Odessa and delivered to the authorities several million roubles belonging to the State which he had rescued. In the fatal affair of the leather it would have been easy for Kleitman to clear himself by surrendering the real culprits. But he adopted another point of view, and declared to the præsidium : " I do not acknowledge your justice. Let me be tried by my party, let me be tried in an open court ; but in this torture-house I refuse to give any explanations ! "

I remember how Kleitman, who was in our cell, told us he would be shot, not because he was guilty, but to enforce the idea of Red Terror, to prove that its bloody hand did not spare even those who, from the Communists' point of view, had rendered great services to the Revolution.

" My execution as a Communist is of essential importance in the interests of the declared Terror," said Kleitman. It is remarkable that Kleitman was so popular, that none of the sailors—the professional executioners—would consent to shoot him, his innocence being too apparent. Who eventually executed him remains a secret.

I must also mention the following case : An artisan was imprisoned in the " Tchrezvychaika." During the search his watch and some money were taken away. When he was released, in his haste to escape from these accursed walls, he forgot all about his papers and things. A fortnight or so later, when he had recovered and the terrors of the " Tchrezvychaika " were fading from his memory, he went back to the office and demanded his things and his savings. He was immediately arrested, and the same night he was shot.

The reason is clear : the things had not been delivered to the office, but had been kept by the agents who had conducted the search. In order to conceal their crime the victim had to be removed. I heard that hideous story not only from Abash but from other Red Guards.

CHAPTER IX.

Socialists in the "Tchrezvychaika"

ONE morning R——tsky burst into our cell in the most joyous mood. He jumped on to his couch, and even crossed himself.

"Why, R——tsky, have you turned Orthodox?" said someone, joking.

"I should think so! To-morrow I shall be free. Senia himself told me so. 'You have been locked up sufficiently for your long tongue,' he said. In general, I have heard that many will be released—some fifty to seventy persons. I saw the list."

We were used to treat R——tsky's words sceptically: nevertheless, there were persistent rumours of mass releases in our prison.

That day Mironin and I visited the cell where the "Tchrezvychaika" agents and the two workmen's leaders were imprisoned. One of them was Ch——sky, a member of the Anarchists' Federation; the other, R——al, a Revolutionary-Socialist. The former was a strong, muscular, middle-sized man of about forty. His long face, with a powerful chin and mouth, showed signs of great courage and energy. R——al, an old workman with a clever face, was one of those old fighters for liberty, whom the Tsarist regime used to keep in prison and Siberia for scores of years. In his various prisons R——al had the leisure not only to meditate on many questions but to read numerous books upon social problems and political economy, and he became an unwavering, strong follower of Socialism. Ch——sky was also one of the Anarchist leaders, and had played a great part in the Revolution. Both were arrested for openly protesting against the Soviet Government at the recent meetings of workmen. Though the latter were greatly irritated by these arrests, the "Tchrezvychaika" decided to show its power in the most pitiless way. The Communists from the Extraordinary Commission decided to stake their all. They understood that the slightest concession made to the workmen's demands might lead to the destruction of the wasps' nest in the Ekaterinensky Square. Nevertheless, it

was now clear that the "Tchrezvychaika" could no more rely upon the support of all the armed forces in Odessa.

Thus the armoured cars, sent to disperse the meetings, refused to use armed force against the workmen. Lastly, the senseless slaughter of people in the name of the Red Terror revolted everyone, and every stone of the Zhdanov house seemed soaked in the blood of innocent martyrs. The usual shameless deceptions by which the workmen were imposed on could no more be kept up, as their eyes had been opened to the real state of affairs. Therefore, the "Tchrezvychaika," much against its will, had to make concessions. Its chiefs had repeatedly offered to set Ch——sky free if he promised to stop his propaganda against the Soviet among workmen. Ch——sky replied: "I am an Anarchist, and do not recognise any Government, yours less than any other! After having been imprisoned in your slaughter-house, I will come out of it a bitterer enemy of yours than ever. As soon as I get out of here I shall strive to open the workmen's eyes to your savage crimes. In the name of the workmen, I demand the abolition of executions without trial. You are aware that if a hair of my head falls here the Anarchist Federation, supported by workmen, will smash up your 'Tchrezvychaika' into smithereens."

And, indeed, nobody dared punish Ch——sky for his words. We repeated Abash's stories to Ch——sky and R——al. They listened to us attentively.

"What is most revolting," said R——al, when we had concluded, "is that all this is done in the name of Socialism! Is it possible that we, old Revolutionaries, have wasted the best years of our life, sacrificed our families, our personal happiness, our all, only to gaze on this Communist millennium? Well, tell me, you Communists," the old man addressed the imprisoned agents, "what is there in common between your policy and Socialism? Whom have you made happy? The peasants? They curse you. You rob them, shoot them, show no care for them. They go unclothed and unshod. What have you given them? Boots, manufactured goods? No. Schools? No! Law Courts? No! There is not a single tribunal for the people in the Odessa district. The harvest is approaching, and many lands are under dispute, as during the absence of their peasant-

owners others have seized them. You appeal to the peasants and demand corn, in exchange for which you flood the villages with Communist literature, demanding from them new sacrifices.

And what have you given the workmen? Bread? No! Work? No! You have filled all the institutions with thieves who steal the nation's property, and cut a dash in the clothing they have stolen in the docks: they wear diamonds, drink, and drive about in carriages all day long. *They* are the builders, the teachers, and *I*, who for thirty years suffered for the people's future happiness—*I* am a counter-revolutionary. Abash is a Socialist, I a counter-revolutionary. Ha! ha! ha! Yes, of course, I am a counter-revolutionary! We do not need such a revolution! Curse *your* revolution!"

The old man became so agitated that he paced the cell up and down nervously.

"Do you think executions without trial will be abolished?" I asked.

"I do not know," replied Ch——sky: "at all events, I promise you that whilst R———al and myself are here none of you will be executed. I am your guardian. In my presence they will not dare to commit their brutal crimes."

The future proved the truth of Ch——sky's words.

CHAPTER X.

Our Guard

THE rising of the German colonists led to many changes in our life. The greater part of the guard was dispatched to the Front; only two shifts remained. One was almost entirely composed of Jews. It was even called "the Jewish Guard." The majority of these Jews treated us very well, and individual Red Guards showed a great understanding, and openly condemned the executions. On days when the Jewish Guard was on duty the prisoners felt less constrained. Moreover, our letters could be safely entrusted to them, and through them we got replies and parcels from home.

The other guard we referred to as the "Nikolaevsky," as it was formed of workmen from Nikolaev. As soon as trouble among the workmen began they immediately abandoned their duty in the "Tchrezvychaika" and returned to Nikolaev. This guard was replaced by Turks, whose honesty was wonderful. They showed us sympathy, very willingly did our errands, and always refused to take any money in return for their services.

During the rising of the colonists two sentries were posted at the doors of each of the three cells: nearly always they slept all night through. Often we heard the report of a shot—the sleeping guard had dropped his rifle or had pulled the trigger unawares.

Several times I pointed out to Mironin that we were so badly guarded that had we wished we might easily have disarmed the guard and escaped.

"True," he replied, "I have often thought of that myself."

"Then how do you explain the fact that all these people remain passively awaiting death?"

"I explain it," said Mironin, after a short pause, "by the fact that all these prisoners are innocent men. Many have been here for weeks, and cannot guess what they have been imprisoned for. Feeling no guilt, they—with an innate faith in Right and Justice—invariably hope that the misunderstanding will be cleared up, that Justice will triumph in the end. So they submit to these dreadful con-

ditions. Just think, if all your guilt lies in the fact of you being a journalist, mine of being a solicitor, another's a merchant, or an officer, human conscience involuntarily protests against the mere possibility of taking a man's life merely because he exercises a certain quite lawful profession. There is no Soviet decree ordering wholesale executions of officers, lawyers, doctors, tradesmen."

"Yes," I interrupted, "and Kaminer? He was shot only because he was a merchant. They did not even attempt to trump up any other accusation against him. And Fedorenko? He was executed for having been a general."

"Quite right. But everyone *wants* to persuade himself that the execution of those men was a misunderstanding, a chance occurrence, or an act of personal revenge on the part of some scoundrels. Being civilised men, we cannot understand the absurdity of a wholesale, senseless destruction of people in the name of the Red Terror. So all are hoping for 'Justice,' which never existed here, and never can exist."

Mironin was silent for a time. "Lastly," he continued, "however strange and impossible it may sound, our terror before the 'Tchrezvychaika,' which seems to exercise a hypnotic power over us, is so strong that our will is paralysed. This *régime* is capable of killing a man's will and making him lose all personality and capacity of asserting himself. These surroundings may encourage baseness, breed provocators. Remember Zakler."

And, indeed, that same day we had an opportunity of witnessing to what moral degradation this accursed system could lead a man.

In our cell there was a young sailor, an educated, decent man, and a good comrade. During the night we heard loud cries in the passage. It appeared that the sentry, a workman posted at our door, was dozing, as usual, when he felt somebody tugging at the parcel under his hand, where he kept his bread and sugar. He sprang up and caught the young sailor just mentioned. The indignant Red Guard swore long and loud at the trembling man, who humbly begged to be forgiven.

Next day we reported to Mironin in his capacity of commissary the sailor's misdeed, which had deeply revolted

the inmates of the cell. Voices were heard saying : "Owing to such fellows the guard will despise and persecute us all. He must be punished as an example."

"Yes," I remarked, "but if the authorities hear of it he will be shot immediately."

Mironin called the culprit.

"Comrade, how could you do such a mean thing—steal bread from a soldier? You know that they are nearly starving at present?"

The sailor sobbed : "Forgive me, comrades. I was hungry, and I do not know what made me do it. This cursed, cursed life has brought me so low."

We decided to impose a penalty upon the culprit—for a week he was to be on duty in the passage, *i.e.* tidy up the passage and lavatory.

"I am ready to do anything," the sailor replied, "to atone for my sin."

Half an hour later yesterday's guard entered the cell and called the commissary. "Comrade commissary," he said, "I hear you have punished the comrade who attempted to take my bread. Do not do that. I shall punish you all, not allow any of you to leave the cell. In short, I object to your punishing him."

"Why, comrade?" asked Mironin.

"Because I have been imprisoned for political reasons myself. I know this life, the hunger, the ill-treatment. When I was sent to Siberia I was not allowed to take leave of my own mother." His voice shook with emotion. "True I got angry yesterday and swore at him. It hurt me to think he tried to steal my last hunch of bread—I am a poor man. Then I thought it over and remembered your position, how here you are worse off than cattle. Then I recollected my own imprisonment, and I felt sorry for him. I understand he is hungry too. I shared my bread with him to-day. And nobody must know this story—it must remain between us."

"Thank you, comrade, you are right. We shall do as you wish," said several voices with emotion.

Many pressed the man's hand, thanking him for his humane treatment of the prisoners.

CHAPTER XI.

New Horrors

DURING these last days the "Tchrezvychaika" was considerably depleted. About a hundred prisoners were released. A member of the Socialistic inspection came to tell us that the others would be set free the next day.

"About 200 will be released; the others will be sent to prison," he said.

After dinner Ch——sky and R——al were liberated. Then we were told that Gadis had placed R——tzky in solitary confinement, because he had been lounging about the yard.

In the evening the well-known executioners came in several times. Abash appeared, rather drunk: Volodka, wearing his red breeches, visited us too. He was likewise the worse for drink, and shouted at the prisoners in the yard. We were locked in early. The Jewish Guard was replaced by the Turks. All these signs appeared very disquieting, but we were rather comforted by the fact that there had been no executions for three weeks, and also by the reassuring words of the Socialist inspector.

It was still daylight when Gadis came with his usual escort; the whole lot were drunk. Eight prisoners were called out of the adjoining cell, among them S. M. Krupensky and young Fedorenko. Passing before our door, Krupensky asked Mironin quietly:

"What can it mean? Where are they taking us to?"

"To be questioned, I suppose," replied Mironin; "it is still early. Yesterday several men came back from the investigation agent at 10 A.M."

"No," answered Krupensky. "I feel I am going to die: besides, you see, *they* are drunk."

I remember distinctly how they were led out into the yard and searched. Krupensky, pale, unshaved, slowly rubbed his glasses and, turning his head, looked at the windows of his cell, from which his comrades were gazing down at him. One of the sentries shouted at him, telling him not to turn round. Young Fedorenko was silently

wringing his hands. An order was given, and they were led towards the gate.

I will not detail the horrors of that night; suffice it to say it was worse than all the others. Owing to the shortage of guards, the executioners came five times to fetch new groups of victims. Old Piotrovsky was led off; he was called just at the time when he was praying in his corner near the window. R——tsky was called out too. Up to the last moment he believed in his release. But the poor boy was executed for his "long tongue," and executed by those same people who had sent him upon his errand. Mironin heard from some persons connected with the Extraordinary Commission that Zusovich had been alive at the time when R——tsky was sent to parley with his family. When the story was disclosed, Zusovich was said to have been shot in secret. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of this information. R——tsky was removed as a dangerous witness.

During this terrible night an incident occurred which serves as a vivid illustration of how caprice and chance ruled man's destinies in the "Tchrezvychaika." Gadis, seated in our cell with a list, began calling out the names. One can imagine what each of us lived through during those moments. One name had been written very illegibly.

"Lap—Lap—Lapin," read Gadis. M. J. Lapin, a Cossack officer, was in my cell. Hearing his name, he half rose and instinctively glanced at Mironin. The latter bent over the sheet and began reading.

"Comrade Gadis," Mironin said in a trembling voice, "the name here is not Lapin, but Lapunenko."

"What is that to you, whether it is Lapin or Lapunenko? What are you poking your nose in for?" shouted the executioner in the fur cap.

"You see, comrade Gadis," continued Mironin, "there is a Lapunenko, accused of robbery, upstairs. As to comrade Lapin, he has not been examined yet."

"Aha!" mumbled Gadis. "All right, let us go and find Lapunenko."

He was found in an upper story. As to Lapin, he was released the next day. When the executioners had carried off their victims' things the prisoners breathed more freely, though nobody slept that night. I recollect how Kisleiko,

the young painter, lay down eating tomatoes. Lunevsky was revolted. "How can you eat at such a time," he exclaimed. "You have no feelings." Kisleiko laughed a strange nervous laugh.

"Why should I not eat a tomato—my *last* one perhaps?" he said.

"What rubbish, Serezha!" cried Lunevsky, "why do you show off."

"Dick, I will be shot to-morrow."

"Nonsense! Why? Impossible!"

"And if I tell you I saw my name in Gadis's list, what do you say to that?"

"You imagined it. You see the executions are over and you have not been called."

"Enough, Dick. I want to sleep, for the last time."

Kisleiko lay down and turned his face to the wall.

"Is it possible that Serezha and I can be 'cashed,'" moaned Lunevsky. "What for? Why?"

I recollected Ch——sky's words, and understood why he had been released so hurriedly that day.

CHAPTER XII.

The Last Days

THE next day Mironin was called out and told that he would be transferred to prison after dinner.

The Commandant's A.D.C. said: "It is your luck; if you are transferred you are saved."

"And the others?" Mironin asked.

The A.D.C. shrugged his shoulders: "Better not inquire about them."

Just then Mironin saw the investigation agent he knew standing by the window. The latter nodded to him and called him nearer.

"I hear you are to be transferred," the agent said, "I am so glad for your sake. You lived through an awful night: but that was nothing in comparison with what will take place to-day."

"What," Mironin asked anxiously, "what awaits the 200 men who are still here?"

"They are doomed. Possibly ten per cent. may be released," the agent replied slowly.

Mironin named some of our comrades: "And Kisleiko, Kolesnikov, Lunevsky?"

"Kolesnikov and Kisleiko are condemned."

"But on what grounds?"

"Do not ask me about it; it is a real nightmare!"

Mironin was agitated: "I know the whole case. The bandits are interested in Kolesnikov's disappearance. It is their work. They have their agents here, even in the praesidium. Can nothing be done to save these young men, against whom there are no proofs of guilt whatever? It is monstrous!"

"Shut up," the agent interrupted; "walls have ears here." And he added in a whisper, "If you think necessary, warn them. Good-bye: we may never meet again."

Now it was Mironin's turn to comfort me, though he was beside himself. "What can we do?" He wrung his hands. "Is it possible that these young men, so full of life, who have become so dear to me, will become mangled corpses in a few hours' time?"

He ran up to the window again and questioned the agent

as to the fate awaiting me. Returning, he shook my hand warmly. "He says nothing threatens you. As far as he knows, your name is not on the lists. Let us go upstairs and warn our poor friends."

We ran upstairs and entered our cell. Lunevsky rushed to meet Mironin. "Tell me the truth, dear friend; you spoke to the agent. Am I to be executed?"

"No, no," replied Mironin.

"And Serezha Kisleiko?"

Mironin tried to speak, but his voice broke into a sob. "Serezha, poor Serezha!"

Lunevsky was in hysterics. Kisleiko stood by. He had heard the conversation. His calm, immobile face showed no emotion; only his lips became quite white. He came up to Lunevsky:

"Dick, don't be an old woman! I have been an officer, and I shall know how to die."

At that moment a guard of Georgians entered the yard. The A.D.C. came into the cell and called out the names.

"Kisleiko!" he read.

Lunevsky clutched at his friend with a moan.

"Dick, be a man. Here is my fiancée's photo. I do not want it to fall into the hands of these scoundrels. Take it and give it her when you are free."

He gave Lunevsky a small locket with a young girl's photo.

"Good-bye, Dick, for ever! Good-bye everybody!" Kisleiko tore himself from the arms of the sobbing Lunevsky and embraced each of us in turn.

"Hurry up, Kisleiko!" shouted the A.D.C.

Kisleiko was led out. There, surrounded by the Red Guard, stood eight condemned men. Amongst them I noticed Shraider, a solicitor, and a remarkably noble-minded man. Why, for what cause, were all these lives to be sacrificed?

I took leave of Mironin with emotion.

"I feel we shall meet again, dear fellow," he said; "have courage. I am sure to-day we have seen the last of our executioners. It is their bloody farewell."

Mironin was wrong. Our sufferings lasted another fortnight. That night several scores of prisoners were executed.

Others, myself among the number, were released in the course of the next few days, though I heard later that my name had been on the condemned list.

Subsequently I was told that before the coming of the volunteers several men were released upon "their moral responsibility."

In the night each of them was visited by a "Tchrezvychaika" agent, who begged to be concealed in virtue of the promise given.

And they all paid their debt of gratitude.

The night before the fall of the Soviet power poor Lunevsky was executed.

The Horrors of the "Tchrezvychaikas"

By Oleñ.

As a supplement to the story of the Odessa Tchrezvychaika we publish extracts from a book by Oleñ, published in Rostov in 1919 and relating the horrors of the Kharkov and Tsaritsin Tchrezvychaikas.

I.—KHARKOV.

The Deserted Tchrezvychaikas

Tchaykovskaya 16.

THE empty house looks down upon the crowd through the dark hollows of its broken windows, from which comes a repulsive stench of decomposing matter. Two wooden coffins, containing the remains of Generals Nechaiev and Molchanov, stand in a room dimly lit by two windows, through which the daylight glimmers feebly. A queer, brown shrunken object, looking like a glove, lies forgotten on the window-sill. Upon examination it turns out to be the skin drawn off somebody's hand.

The rooms in the cellar are all very much alike, and all are permeated by the same sickly smell of decay: the walls and floors bear marks of blood. The upper stories tell us the tale of the executioners' orgies. No traces of blood are to be seen here, but the floor is strewn with whole and broken bottles, empty tins, crusts, and other rubbish. . . .

There is another grave in the ravine—a discarded well. Bodies which have not been transferred to the cellar are lying here on the ground. Besides shot wounds, many bear traces of torture. Some had the skin drawn off the soles of their feet or their hands, others had numerous lacerated and incised wounds: there are dislocated arms and legs, nails driven into skulls, between ribs, and under the finger-nails.

The Second "Tchrezvychaika" (147 Sumskaia Street) bears the same traces of inhuman Bolshevist executions. Here we also see a small monument of past sufferings—a wooden board upon which the victims wrote down their last thoughts and farewells. These inscriptions are one long

cry of despair and agony from dying men. They have been published in the newspapers, and are probably well known.

"Dear Mother, you will never see your poor Kolia again."

"Do not speak of life's uselessness—oh, how sweet life is at twenty-one!"

"I am dying innocent."

"I am dying only because somebody wishes to revenge himself upon my brother."

These are signed: Kulikin, Andreev, Znamensky, Voblevsky.

Opening the Graves.

Altogether fifty-three bodies were dug up. A medical examination showed that some of the victims had been thrown into the pit while still alive, and that before being put to death many had been previously tortured. Some had been flogged, others had portions of their flesh torn out, or a foot cut off, a thigh broken, right hands cut off, bayonet wounds in the back, broken jaws. Not less than ten victims had been buried alive.

During the first days of the investigation 229 bodies were unearthed, 107 in the "Tchrezvychaika" concentration camp, ninety-seven in the gaol, and twenty-five near the sappers' barracks. There is full evidence of the fact that the victims had been tortured: some of the corpses have been found with hands, feet, or fingers cut off; broken bones. Some were burnt or scalded, six had their hands bound; in the case of one of these, the rope was tightened so as to break the skin and cut into the flesh.

Who were the Judges?

In Kharkov the struggle against "counter-revolution" and the wholesale destruction of the people's enemies were entrusted to the "Tche-ka"—an extraordinary Commission of five members. The legal part was under the direction of Maevsky, who had begun his career by selling sunflower seeds in the market, and received the finishing touches to his education by serving as clerk at a local solicitor's. Many witnesses have testified to the reason which brought on an arrest. We will quote a few examples from the numerous testimonies.

Bashinsky, a cadet of sixteen, had incautiously written to a comrade, Poliakov, that Kolchak and his volunteers would soon occupy Kharkov, and that it would be possible then to enlist in his army.

When Yakimov, a militiaman, was arrested, neither the accused nor his accusers could grasp clearly what was his crime—whether he had been chairman of a Monarchist or an Anarchist organisation.

S. D. Ilyin, subsequently shot at the Tchaykovskaya, was accused of the following: At one time he had been the chairman of the "Union of Russians" (not the "Union of the Russian People"), and the search revealed that he had been in possession of a list of the people's commissaries, where against every assumed name stood the real one—Trotsky-Bronstein, Steklov-Nahamkes, Kamenev-Rosenfeld, Zinoviev-Apfelbaum, and so on. Such documents were considered to constitute one of the most heinous crimes against the Soviet Government, and their owners suffered the severest punishments.

G. I. Ignatischev, who was accused of the same crime, did not suffer capital punishment, only because he caught spotted typhus. Witnesses assert that his illness infuriated Sayenko, who, fearing his victim would escape him, was always to be found in the vicinity of the hospital, awaiting the patient's recovery.

"The arrested were sitting on chairs, lining the walls in the Commandant's reception-room," says N. T——y. "The guard (mere boys) were crowded near the door. Sentinels from the Tchaykovsky camp were posted near each of the three doors. After a short time a youngish sailor, comrade Eduard, wearing a large German Iron Cross, came in from the Commandant's room and began verifying the list of prisoners in broken Russian.

"Your surname? What party do you belong to? What property have you got? You are accused of counter-revolution and agitation against the Soviet Government; you called Trotsky a Jew."

Tortures.

We have seen that examinations were accompanied by tortures.

The commonest tortures consisted in scalding parts of the body with boiling water, driving needles under the nails, and beating with iron rods.

Israilit, one of the members of the "five," was famous for his cruelty. He had selected as his speciality torturing youths, who often unconsciously gave up the names of people they scarcely knew. Still, even Israilit could not be compared with Sayenko, the Commandant of the Tchaykovskaya Tchrezvychaika. In his sketch, "In Gaol," V. Smirennomudrensky describes Sayenko thus:

"A hysterical degenerate, cocaine-maniac, with an automatic pistol in his shaking hand, covered all over with machine-gun belts. A sadist, he produced a dreadful impression." He enjoyed seeing how respectable men, chiefly priests, had to clean the lavatories, using their hands in the absence of shovels.

II.—TSARITSIN

On the Barges.

The prisoners were kept in the hold, whither they were lowered through the hatch. The executions took place at night. The executioners made an entertainment of it, thus imitating the Spanish inquisitors.

They would go down into the hold with lanterns in their hands, their faces partly concealed by black hoods, and clanking their swords.

Treading with their heavy boots over the prostrate bodies of the sleepers, they would thrust their lanterns into the faces of those who woke up, and pass on with coarse jeers. "Not this one! Here, you, wait a bit; it's not your turn yet!"

If the man they wanted was not found, they called out the name; and if the hapless victim, galvanised with terror, did not answer, everybody would be told to get up and stand in rows.

When discovered, the victim would be flogged with horse-whips, the blows being showered anywhere, so that one man had his eyeball lashed out in this manner.

After this the condemned were dragged off to the

"Tchrezvychaika." Sometimes, however, they were finished off at once on the bank. This became a kind of sport: the victims would be formed into a line, knee-deep in water. The mounted executioners would ride up and hack at them with swords. The wounded fell into the water, and were drowned. The bodies were left on the spot. Besides Trotsky-Goldstein (who posed as a relative of Trotsky-Bronstein) the barge executioners were Postnikov, Ratenko, Bogatov, and others.

The executions by day were looked upon as an amusing entertainment, and the Tchrezvychaika officials invited visitors specially for the occasion. Both hosts and guests came out on the balcony of a house situated on the river bank to enjoy the spectacle. Knowing this, the executioners purposely prolonged the execution, not killing the victims at once, but first torturing them. For instance, the condemned were ordered to run, a shower of bullets being fired after them: they were shot through the arms and legs, and then finished off with bayonets. The number of persons shot in Tsaritsin was over three thousand.

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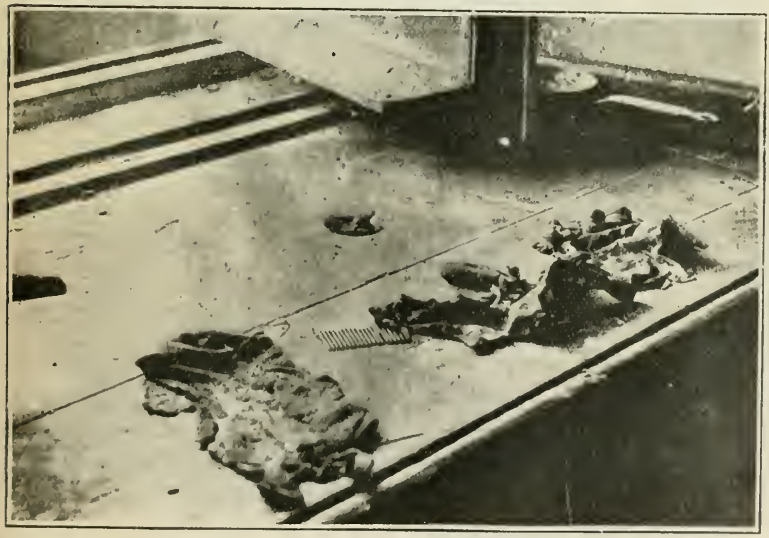
Exhumation of the bodies of the victims shot in Kharkov by the Tchrezvychaika.

Bodies of peasants shot by Bolsheviks (Yenisseisk province).

Archbishop Plato of Esthonia (XX) *murdered by Bolsheviks in Dorpat.*



Human "gloves" found in the torture-chamber in Kharkov. The hand was plunged in boiling water and the skin pulled off.

Ikon in St. Nicholas' Church (Ozerskaia Stanitsa, South Russia). The marks on it show the damage done by Bolsheviks.

Body of man flogged to death with ramrods (Kharkov).

WHEN you have read this please pass it on to a friend. The Russian Liberation Committee is most anxious to hear from all persons interested in Russia and will always gladly receive correspondence or a visit.

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43. Cry of Despair from the Dying City.
44. German Plots in South Russia.
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